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ABSTRACT

Distinguishing the contextual realm addressed by ontological education as a valid area for inquiry by those who think about language and communication, this paper discusses an approach to education that is ontological in nature, in that its focus is the "being" of human beings rather than their knowledge. The paper explores several ideas drawn from the work of the Landmark Education Corporation, an international organization that offers a curriculum of courses and seminars to the public as well as to corporations and communities. The first section of the paper considers the relation of language to action, of theory to practice; the second addresses the nature of ontological distinctions, which are essential elements of Landmark's programs, and the third section shows how a specific distinction is developed in one of these programs--the major rubric for this distinction being "a human being as a network of conversations." The purpose of the paper is to distinguish the arena in which ontological education functions, and to suggest the way such education achieves its results. The discussion in the paper draws upon the thinking of several postmodern philosophers, including Martin Heidegger, Richard Rorty, and Hans-Georg Gadamer. Contains 29 notes. (RS)

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An Ontological Approach to Education

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This paper was presented at the annual conference of the Western States Communication Association, Portland, February 1995. The author is grateful to Steve Zaffron and Barbara Holmes of Landmark Education for their invaluable interaction during this project; and to John Stewart, Walter Fisher, Eric Eisenberg and Jeff Bineham for their contributions to my own thinking about language and communication.

Abstract

This paper discusses an approach to education that is ontological in nature, in that its focus is the being of human beings rather than their knowledge. This is contextual education: it addresses the ontological context in which all our knowledge is held. The paper explores several ideas drawn from the work of the Landmark Education Corporation, which has developed an ontological approach in its programs. The purpose of the paper is to distinguish the arena in which ontological education functions, and to suggest the way such education achieves its results. The discussion draws upon the thinking of several postmodern philosophers, including Martin Heidegger, Richard Rorty, and Hans-Georg Gadamer.

An Ontological Approach to Education

In this paper, I will present an approach to education that I believe to be of considerable interest for thinkers and teachers in the field of speech communication. This approach to education is ontological in nature, and is therefore distinct from the traditional epistemological paradigm in which educating is a process of increasing knowledge. The focus of an ontological approach is the being of human beings, rather than human knowledge: it explores the possibility that our actions and interactions arise from our way of being human, rather than from what we know. Our way of being, however, is not readily available to be interacted with in the way that we interact with our knowledge--increasing it, refining it, etc. On the contrary, it is the nature of being that we do not know it. We simply are it. The thrust of ontological education is into this transparent realm: its function is to provide access to the dimension that generates our way of being in the world. Its method is an inquiry into the ontological assumptions that are at work unnoticed in our language, communication and relationships.

I do not propose that this ontological approach is a substitute for traditional knowledge-based education. Its relationship to knowledge is contextual: ontological education addresses our unexamined background of assumptions about the function and possibility of knowledge. This is the context in

which our knowledge is held. It is who we are in the matter of what we know.

For thinkers and educators in speech communication, the ontological approach that I will discuss here is of particular interest for two specific reasons. First, one of its fundamental elements is a radical exploration of the nature of language. An ontological approach inquires deeply into the possibility that our understanding of the world is constituted in language, rather than being given by an objective reality. Language therefore refers not to words alone, but to the world-understanding that is assumed and reified by our terms and concepts.[1] This is an issue of increasing centrality for the field of speech communication. Many of us continue to think of language as merely symbolic; and while this perspective has demonstrated its validity, it may now be limiting to our thinking. Further, while some of us understand and subscribe to a consitutive view of language at a theoretical level, most of us continue to live in the world as though our own point of view is the objectively valid one. Thus the serious consideration of this question is vital for our discipline's development. A second point of interest for speech communication scholars is the profoundly dialogic nature of this educational approach. Its dynamic sheds considerable light on the possibility of dialogue as a discourse form, as well as a pedagogical method. It illuminates Martin Buber's view that access to ourselves is through dialogue with others, and that "all real living is meeting."[2]

I have explored elements of an ontological approach in my own speech communication classes, with positive results. However, the source of the approach that I will discuss here is the work of the Landmark Education Corporation, an international organization that offers a curriculum of courses and seminars to the public as well as to corporations and communities. Landmark's work is an ongoing inquiry into the possibility of an ontological approach to education. In the words of the organization's 1992 "Statement of Accountability": "We promise to design and provide education that does not merely impart knowledge, but rather alters the very nature of what is possible in being human."[3] People participate in Landmark's programs in order to be more effective in some area of their lives, personal or professional. The programs as a whole constitute an evolving exploration into the ontological dimension of language and communication.

The background I bring to this paper is of the kind that Hans-Georg Gadamer has distinguished as Erfahrung--an experience that one undergoes or is subject to--rather than Erlebnis, an experience that a subject "has" of an object.[4] My participation in Landmark's programs has been extensive over a period of more than twenty years; and for eight of those years, as a student and teacher of speech communication, I have written at length about the language and philosophical assumptions of this educational approach.[5] I have studied this work deeply and have explored its validity in my own life, an exploration supplemented by

observations and interactions with other Landmark participants over two decades.[6] My finding is that this approach is effective and highly thought-provoking, and that it merits serious attention by those who think and teach about human interaction.

Landmark's work sheds light upon, and is illuminated by, questions that are central to postmodern philosophy, and in this discussion I will draw upon the ideas of several relevant thinkers. My purpose in this essay is not primarily to describe or explain Landmark's programs (although the third section of the paper contains some of that), but to begin to distinguish the arena or domain in which the programs function. This arena is an unfamiliar one for traditional knowledge-based education. Its explanation, even its conceptualization, are problematic; therefore it is a domain more appropriately hinted at than explained. The relationship of being to language is intimate but elusive, and as Martin Heidegger pointed out, hints allow something to be glimpsed that cannot quite be grasped.[7] Such glimpses may nevertheless prove transforming, through their unconcealment of the context in which we think and live. Ontological education is aimed at providing such transformative glimpses.

My purpose in this paper, then, is to hint at the domain in which this education functions. The paper has three sections; each section explores a relevant idea, using material drawn from Landmark's work as well as from my own thinking about that work.

The first section considers the relation of language to action. The second addresses the nature of ontological distinctions, which are central elements of Landmark's programs. The third and final section shows how a specific distinction is developed in one of these programs.

Language and action

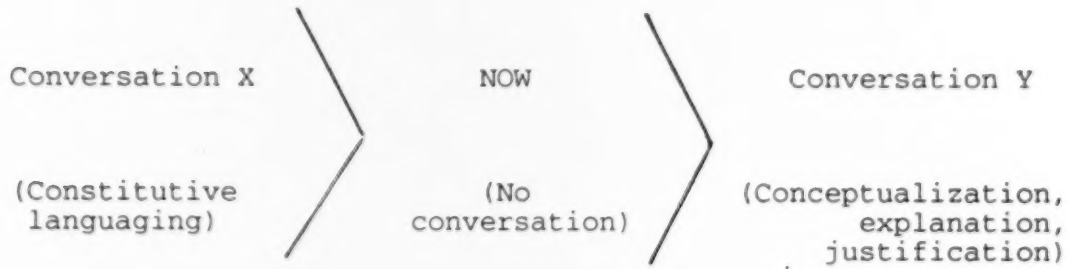
A new paradigm is introduced, according to Richard Rorty, not by arguing against the prevailing paradigm but by speaking differently about things. Arguments are inevitably conducted in the language of the prevailing paradigm, and this limits their outcome. The paradigmatic thinker, on the other hand, points to a particular idea or phenomenon and "says things like 'try thinking of it this way'-- or more specifically, 'try to ignore the apparently futile traditional questions by substituting the following new and possibly interesting questions."[8]

One of the ideas that Landmark's work subjects to new questioning is the theory-practice distinction, a dualism that informs much of our current communication pedagogy. At the theory-practice boundary, the questions that arise and the solutions that are devised involve application. This model assumes that in order to become educated in communication, one first engages in cognitive mastery of theory, through the understanding and assimilation of concepts. This understanding may then be applied to actions. The assumption is that we think about things as we are doing them, and that by bringing different

thinking to bear on our actions we may be able to do them differently.

But deeper reflection will suggest a different view of the situation. In the moment of action, we are never thinking about what we are doing, we are simply acting. Observe for yourself: you cannot think about what you are doing right now. By the time you can conceptualize it in order to think about it, the "now" that you have conceptualized will be in the past and another will have taken its place, that one gone too by the time you can think about it. Certainly, one can think while acting, but not about the present action. We confront each moment prereflectively. This situation problematizes the notion that we can apply theory to practice, since our actions are always out ahead of our ability to think about them.

We may picture the situation this way:



In each successive moment of "now," there is only the prereflective occurrence of the moment. Any conceptualization about the moment--any explanation, judgment, justification, or

application of knowledge--always either precedes or follows the moment's occurrence. In this figure, conversation X is any thinking about an event that precedes it; conversation Y is thinking about an event after it has occurred. Between them, in each moment of now, there is no conversation, there is only occurrence. We dance with the moment as it confronts us. Only subsequently can it be reflected upon.[9]

But although we confront the moment prereflectively, it does not occur for us as meaningless. Each moment's meaning is given in conversation X, the background of understanding against which it occurs. Consider the hypothetical example of a professional tennis player in action. As a powerful serve comes across the net, the player is not thinking about how to move or swing the racket. Rather, he or she is in a dance with the occurrence of the tennis ball. For a tennis player, the function of coaching is not to provide information to be applied while playing, but to produce a shift in the way the tennis ball occurs. Specifically, for a professional player the ball is more likely to occur as sufficiently large and slow to be hittable; for a novice, the same ball would occur as smaller and faster. The function of training in any arena is to shift the occurrence of phenomena in that arena.

Of course, the example I have just described could also be validly discussed in terms of skill development, cognitive mastery or muscle memory. Each of those ways of talking about the situation defines phenomena in a particular way--in the terms

of a particular language game, to use Wittgenstein's term, or vocabulary, to use Rorty's[10]--and thereby suggests a particular approach as appropriate. In the vocabulary I am proposing here, human action is a response to the world's occurrence in each moment, and the world's occurrence is given by the context of understanding in which it occurs.[11] Given this assumption, what is appropriate is an inquiry into the nature of constitutive languaging. What kind of speaking shapes the world's occurrence, and what is the access to such speaking? This concern is central to the work of Landmark Education, and I will explore the question further in the next section of this paper.

Ontological distinctions

Since "a talent for speaking differently, rather than arguing well, is the chief instrument of cultural change," Rorty says that the method for cultural transformation is to "redescribe lots and lots of things in new ways," thereby creating alternate ways of thinking about, and being in, the situation.[12] One of the most interesting aspects of Landmark's work is what it suggests about the nature of the "redescription" process to which Rorty refers, the process by which a new ontological possibility is brought forth for human existence. The process is shown to be one of distinction rather than redescription: a way of being is distinguished as a possibility. Whatever is redescribed always persists in the redescription, since the very idea of change includes the changed-from as well

as the changed-to. But ontological distinction is the generation of a new possibility for being.

The difference is crucial and subtle. A universe in which space is curved is not simply a Newtonian universe redescribed. It is a new possibility, as gravity was, and gives us a new universe and new ways to be in it.[13] This is not to deny that we live in a world of real and solid things. As Gadamer said, "In every view of the world the existence of the world-in-itself is implied."[14] On the other hand, he added, "what the world is is not different from the views in which it presents itself."[15] There is something out there, as Rorty puts it, but what is true about it is a function of human languaging; it is the way it has been distinguished for us in the language of our culture.[16] These ontological distinctions provide our only access to the world. We do not perceive raw sense data, or "brute things." The world always occurs meaningfully for human beings, and the meaning is given by reference to the horizon or context of meaning in which it occurs.

Distinctions are not the same as concepts, which are elements of an epistemological model. Distinctions give being, sometimes overriding what is known--in the way that our knowledge of planetary movement does not prevent our everyday experience of the sun rising and setting.[17] Certainly, the process of developing a distinction includes the discussion of concepts, as elements of the dialogue. But the concepts are not its crucial element: they serve as hints and pointers to the unspoken

ontological domain. This is the domain the dialogue aims to unconceal, and its unconcealment occurs through the dialogic development of ontological distinctions.

A distinction is a clearing for human thought and action. One understands concepts, one dwells in distinctions. A distinction gives the possibility of a way of being in the world, a place to come from in one's thinking and acting. But it gives from out of the background: a distinction is itself never spoken, but through dialogue is made present as something unspoken.[18] This is why Heidegger proposed hints as an appropriate form in ontological dialogue. By hinting, we may allow the unspoken to be glimpsed while remaining unspoken. Hints serve as pointers, almost successfully: "They beckon us <u>toward</u> that from which they unexpectedly bear themselves toward us."[19]

Consider <u>art</u> as a distinction, an opening in which to stand and view the world. From early in life, members of our culture receive hints at the nature of art, My own first conceptualization was that art was painting and drawing, which is what we did in my elementary school "art class." Later I learned that music and literature too could be art, and that there were also performing arts and culinary arts. Over the years I have read and thought much about art, and have stood or sat before many works of art. The power of these explorations has not been the cumulative production of a clear conceptual understanding or definition of art, but the distinction of art as a realm--a space in the world to create or to encounter a work, an ontological

clearing in which art can be. As a concept, art is always formulaic; one can never say by analysis of examples what art is, only what it was. But an inquiry into art may result in art's being distinguished, as a way of being with a work that makes possible an event of art.

Ontological distinctions expand the possibility of the world's meaning. If the distinction number did not exist in the language of a culture, a pair of phenomena would not occur as "two." But when the possibility of number has been distinguished, phenomena suddenly occur in numbers; numbers of things show up everywhere. Or consider "human rights" as a distinction. A thousand years ago there were no human rights; ruling classes had privileges, but human beings per se were not beings with rights. That we now see ourselves that way is the result of human rights having been distinguished as a possiblity. This shift in our view of things did not occur through the collective cultural understanding of a concept, but through the generation in the culture's language of a possible way of being human.

A way of being may be distinguished in the language of one culture but be unavailable in another culture. Gadamer pointed out the problem this creates for translation between languages:

> The translator has a linguistic text before him, that is, something said either verbally or in writing, that he has to translate into his own language. . . .But this means that he must gain for himself the infinite space of the saying

> that corresponds to what is said in the foreign language. Everyone knows how difficult it is. . . .the translation, as it were, has no space. It lacks that third dimension from which the original (i.e., what is said in the original) is built up in its range of meaning.[20]

This "third dimension" is the unspoken realm of language, which holds the ontological possibilities distinguished by the culture. In linguistic translation between cultures, the importance of this realm becomes apparent; it is equally important though less apparent in interactions within a culture.

Light is shed on the difference between distinctions and concepts by Rorty's designation of metaphor as "the growing point of language."[21] Drawing on the work of Donald Davidson, Rorty has proposed a model of metaphor that is more primordial than literary device. This is the generative level of metaphor that gives the world its meaning by determining what we see things as. Such metaphors comprise what Heidegger called the "as-structure" of interpretation, the understanding that shapes our experience of phenomena.[22] By generating a new metaphor, we create new ontological possibility--e.g., human beings as beings-with-rights. Such metaphors open new world to move within. But in Rorty's model, once a distinction has been assimilated into the human world, it has become a "dead metaphor"--"just one more, literally true or literally false, sentence of the language."[23] Rorty does not conclude, however, that we should resist this process of assimilation. On the contrary: "The proper honor to

pay to new, vibrantly alive metaphors is to help them become dead metaphors as soon as possible, to rapidly reduce them to the status of tools of social progress."[24] This is how our world develops. The idea of number is no longer the transformative experience that it was for Pythagoras; it is just the way things are.[25] It is worth noting that "human rights" is still very much a live metaphor, not yet distinguished in many parts of the world. In those places, activists are engaged in the ongoing languaging of this possibility, both through their speaking and through actions generated by and consistent with the distinction.

The function of a culture's thinkers is to generate distinctions for human thinking. The significance of philosophers lies not in what they have thought, but in the space they have distinguished for us to think, and to be. "The unthought is the greatest gift that thinking can bestow," said Heidegger.[26] Specifically, thinkers create space for thinking by opening questions; therefore it is useful, in distinguishing the nature of distinctions, to consider the nature of questions and their role in thinking. According to Gadamer, insights always imply a contextualizing question:

> They always presuppose a pointer in the direction of an area of openness from which the idea can come, ie they presuppose questions. The real nature of the sudden idea is perhaps less the realization of the solution to a problem than the sudden realization of the question that advances into openness and thus

> makes an answer possible. Every sudden idea has the structure of a question.[27]

Therefore, if thinking wants to get to the heart of the matter, it explores the question, the open realm to which the answer points. Behind all our spoken answers is "an infinite dialogue in questioning," and "everything that is said stands in such space."[28]

Answers are epistemological phenomena. They can be known, said Rilke, but they cannot be lived.[29] A question engages us, an answer closes the engagement; and in many cases this is appropriate, since answers are often useful. But there are questions, according to Heidegger--questions about human beings, about language and thinking--that can never be answered, but instead require that we settle down and live within them.[30] Living in a question, we confront phenomena in a particular way. Standing authentically in a question, one is open to the situation, and present to its possibilities.[31]

I call the reader's attention to the nature of the questions raised so far in this paper--i.e., the difference between knowing something and being something, between distinction and concept, between distinction and redescription, between a new metaphor and a dead one. Questions such as these are useful for distinguishing the ontological realm because the differences they articulate resist differentiation. The elements of each difference point to an area between them that slips conceptualization and plays at the borders of thinkability.

Consider also such differentiations as Buber's I-Thou and I-it, or Heidegger's Being and being. These differences persist as questions, defying closure and generating thinking. Physicist David Bohm, writing about dialogue from the holistic perspective of quantum theory, suggests that the thinking of a culture is a stream--a "free flow of meaning between people." Answers and opinions are like leaves floating on the stream's surface; we identify ourselves with them, and may mistake them for the stream of thinking that is their source.[32] But having thoughts is not the same as thinking. The stream of thinking is kept open by keeping questions open in the dialogues of the culture. The function of thinkers is to generate questions that resist closure and generate ontological possibility.

A concept--such as human rights--may serve as a rubric for a distinction. A rubric is a languaging that hints at a distinction. In his extensive analysis of the writing of Nietzsche, Heidegger proposed that central Nietzschean concepts such as "the eternal return of the Same" and "will to power" serve as major rubrics in Nietzsche's thinking. All of them hint at a single unspoken thought at the core of the thinking--the generative distinction that all Nietzsche's writing attempted to articulate.[33] Each rubric stands in a particular relationship to the distinction: each portrays it "from just one perspective, although in each case it is a perspective that defines the whole."[34] This is the paradoxical holographic nature of the

rubrics: each is a partial point of view, but each holds the possibility of access to the whole of the distinction.

This accounts for the all-at-once, "Aha!" quality that attends ontological insight. Distinction occurs as an event, rather than a process. Heidegger spoke about ontological insight as Augenblick, which translates variously as "lightning-flash," "the glance of an eye," or simply "the moment."[35] In the all-at-once event of ontological insight, one sees suddenly the whole in the part, as if a narrow perspective had unexpectedly widened, or as if one had suddenly gotten the joke. But rubrics work together to evoke this event. Thus, discussing his own analysis of Nietzshe's work, Heidegger said:

> If we occasionally connect parallel statements or similar notes, we must always bear in mind that for the most part they derive from distinct strata of thinking and that a statement yields its full import only when the often subtly shifting stratum is co-defined.[36]

Several languagings together may distinguish an area for thinking that is fully conceptualized by none of them but unspoken in them all. Thus the methodology of distinction is the creation of languagings that unconceal a background. But this unconcealment does not occur as a gradual coming-to-understand. The sudden character of ontological insight is the result of the holographic quality of the rubrics: you don't get it for a long time, and

then all of a sudden you get it all at once. And when you do get it, the world is altered.[37]

To return to the example of the tennis player discussed above: the player's skill might traditionally be explained by reference to practice, the idea that repetition of a behavior produces progress toward the mastery of that behavior. From the perspective of an ontological approach, practice can be seen as a process for the development of distinctions in the arena being practiced. Learning to ride a bicycle is not learning how to hold one's body, but developing new distinctions in the area of balance. As one comes to dwell in finer distinctions of balance, there is a shift in the occurrence of that part of the world called bicycle riding. For those with very fine distinctions in the area of balance, a tight rope occurs as walkable.

Generating a distinction

In the final section of this paper I will describe the way a specific ontological distinction was generated in a recent Landmark program in which I participated. The major rubric for this distinction was a human being as a network of conversations. This is not a new idea for academics familiar with postmodern theory, in which subjectivity is decentered into discourse; but in Landmark's work, the discussion of this idea is not theoretical or academic. The rubric is proposed as a stimulus for dialogue among a group of participants who expect, as a result of the educational experience, to have more fulfilling and

productive lives and to experience increased satisfaction in their work and relationships. These are the kinds of results promised by Landmark's programs.

The approach taken in the courses to produce these results is ontological inquiry: dialogic inquiry into the ontological design of human beings, and into the way that design is held in our thinking and languaging. As inquiry, this approach maintains an attitude of questioning, including the persistent questioning of its own conclusions. The tools for the inquiry are an evolving body of distinctions generated and developed in Landmark's courses and programs. The general format of the programs (which vary in size from small groups to several hundred participants) is simple: a course leader introduces the rubric for an ontological distinction, and the distinction is then developed in a dialogue among participants, who explore with the course leader various questions and implications generated from the rubric.

This dialogue, since it aims at ontological insight, is fully involving, calling into play the being of the participants and not their intellects alone (although intellect, I emphasize, is challenged and rewarded by this work). Such fully involving dialogue demands openness, and Landmark's programs are characterized by an open atmosphere, in which participants freely address the relevant ontological data provided by their own ways of being. This freedom in the dialogue grows out of its working assumption that ways of being are not personal phenomena, but are

manifestations of a shared ontological background: I may be wet, but it is not my personal rainstorm. This view creates the possibility of responsibility unaccompanied by blame, guilt and defensiveness. Thus it allows the dialogue to move beyond the realm of intellect and to become the fully involving conversation that ontological insight demands.

The dialogue generated from a given languaging proceeds until participants in the course are able to dwell in the distinction. Ontological dialogue allows participants to inhabit the space indicated by the languaging--to try it on as a possible way of being, and to look out from it at their familiar circumstances. Once the possibility has been distinguished, the next rubric is introduced and the next distinction developed. The result of this process of distinguishing possibilities is the unconcealment of the realm of possibilty, and each Landmark course is designed to achieve this result through the development of a particular body of distinctions. Since this is a result in being, rather than knowing, it is not uncommon for participants in ontological education to be enthusiastic but inarticulate about their experience. The familiar language games of description and explanation do not give access to the unspoken realm.

To turn to my recent experience in a Landmark course: the dialogue that was generated around the rubric "a human being as a network of conversations" continued through several weekend seminars and small group functions. Harmonic rubrics and open

questions were ongoingly provided in the course, but the process was not so much the assimilation of additional data as the deepening exploration of the major rubric's implications. As homework, participants were assigned to record the conversations that we heard ourselves articulating daily, expressions that constitute ways of being in the world: it'll never work, there's always hope, I'll get it done. We assembled collages of the world constituted by our conversations, and created autobiographies to discover the age at which specific conversations were added to our networks. We explored the question of whether our ways of being in specific areas of our lives, such as work or sex or money, might be the appropriate expressions of a six-year-old or an adolescent, rather than a fully functioning adult. And we examined the structural conversations that over the years we had incorporated into our bodies: ways of standing, sitting or moving that are embodied conversations about being in the world.

Over the duration of the course, the focus of this exploration shifted from the individual as a network of conversations to the community as source and beneficiary of those conversations. Our options for ways of being are given to us by our community, so participants were assigned to notice and record the conversations that constitute the talk in our communities. We considered also the disappearing nature of conversations: once spoken, a conversation is gone unless it is somehow kept in

existence, so why do some live on in a network or in a community while others disappear? How are conversations kept in existence?

Interacting with these questions were others that could be grouped under the major rubric play as the access to growth and development. An individual may in some cases upgrade a conversation so that it expresses a maturer view of the world and more adult capacities. The individual may then return the upgraded conversation to the community from which it arose, thereby providing that community with a new way of being in some area, such as gender or politics. But one cannot upgrade a conversation by resisting its present form. This is why Rorty proscribed argument as a means to cultural change. To resist a way of being is to reify it (don't think about elephants), while at the same time one's own actions are dominated by whatever one is resisting.[38] Therefore play was developed as a central distinction in the Landmark course, explored at length as a possible way of being with our conversations.[39] Play frees, and is thus preliminary to upgrading. When a way of being is not resisted, but recognized as a conversation with which one can play, one is simultaneously freed to play with other possibilities.

Although the ideas I have presented here may certainly be engaged intellectually--may be understood, agreed with, or argued against--the essential result produced by the Landmark course is not in this domain. That result is ontological. The area opened up by the distinctions of the dialogue, the space for being that

is hinted at by the concepts, becomes available for dwelling. In my own life, I have experienced the result of the course as freedom to be: I move more freely among the conversations that comprise me and my world, and while I bring to my life no less rigor and commitment, I bring a greater sense of play and self-expression. This is a result in the contextual realm addressed by ontological education. My purpose in this paper has been to distinguish that realm as a valid area for inquiry by those who think about language and communication.

Notes

1. For an early expression of this idea in a speech communication journal, see Stanley Deetz, "Words Without Things: Toward a Social Phenomenology of Language," Quarterly Journal of Speech 59 (1973): 40-51. The work of John Stewart has also been important in developing this perspective, most recently in Articulate Contact (SUNY Press, in press).

2. Martin Buber, I and Thou (NY: Scribner/Collier, 1987), 11.

3. Material regarding Landmark's programs is available from the Landmark Education Corp., 353 Sacramento Street, Suite 200, San Francisco CA 94111.

4. Gadamer's distinction is discussed by John Stewart in "An Interpretive Approach to Validity," in Interpretive Approaches to Interpersonal Communication, Kathryn Carter and Mick Presnell, editors (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994). On the subject of erfahrung, Stewart observes: "Undergoing the experience of a finding, letting a finding happen to us, and then following through in application is a legitimate--and in fact predominant--way to validate it" (p. 61).

5. R. Bruce Hyde, "Speaking Being: Ontological Rhetoric as Transformational Technology," paper presented at the annual conference of the Speech Communication Association, Chicago 1992, and, in an earlier version, at the annual meeting of the Association for Integrative Studies, St. Paul, 1991; "The Ontological Rhetoric of Werner Erhard," presentation at the Alta Conference on Organizational Communication, Alta, Utah, 1991; "Saying the Clearing: A Heideggerian Analysis of the Ontological Rhetoric of Werner Erhard," Ph.D. diss., University of Southern California, 1991; "The Transformational Technology of Werner Erhard: A New Language Game for Being," paper presented at the annual SCA conference, San Francisco, 1989.

6. A study by Daniel Yankelovich, cited in Landmark materials, reports positive outcomes for a significant number of Landmark participants; see Landmark Forum brochure.

7. Martin Heidegger, On the Way to Language, trans. Peter D. Hertz (NY: Harper & Row, 1971), 24-27.

8. Richard Rorty, Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity (NY: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 9.

9. I acknowledge that the linear temporality embedded in this model needs to be questioned; but that particular exploration is beyond the scope of this paper.

10. See for example, on how our world is shaped by our ways of talking about it, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Blue and Brown Books (NY: Harper & Row, 1960), 7 ff.; and Rorty, Contingency Irony and Soldarity, chapter one.

11. For Heidegger on the language-being relationship as one of giving--"it gives" (es gibt), as in "language gives being"--see "Letter on Humanism," in Basic Writings, ed. David Farrell Krell (NY: Harper & Row, 1962), 193; and On the Way to Language, 87-88. Also relevant is Kenneth Burke's essay, "Terministic Screens" (in Language as Symbolic Action, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966, 44-62). However, as John Stewart points out in Chapter 7 of Articulate Contact, Burke's view of the language-being relationship was shaped by his commitment to the symbolic paradigm.

12. Rorty, Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity, 7, 9.

13. For Heidegger on Newton's laws as distinguishing possibility, see Being and Time, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (NY: Harper & Row, 1962), 269.

14. Hans-Georg Gadamer, Truth and Method, trans. Garrett Barden and John Cumming (NY: Crossroad, 1988), 406.

15. Ibid.

16. Rorty, Contingency, Irony and Solidarity, 4-5.

17. The example of the sun rising has been used by both Heidegger, Introduction to Metaphysics, trans. Ralph Manheim, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), 105; and Gadamer, Truth and Method, 407.

18. For Heidegger on the unspoken, see On the Way to Language, 119-125.

19. Ibid., 26. I owe the phrase "almost successfully" to Wallace Stevens, who said that "poetry must resist intelligence almost successfully."

20. Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Man and Language," in Philosophical Hermeneutics (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 67-68.

21. Richard Rorty, "Philosophy as Science, Metaphor, Politics," in Essays on Heidegger and Others (NY: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 12.

22. Martin Heidegger, Being and Time, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (NY: Harper & Row, 1962), 189-192.

23. Rorty, Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity, 18.

24. Rorty, "Philosophy as Science, Metaphor, Politics," 17.

25. For a discussion of the Pythagorean relationship to ideas, see Jacob Needleman, The Heart of Philosophy (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1982), chapter three.

26. Heidegger, What Is Called Thinking?, 137.

27. Gadamer, Truth and Method, 329.

28. Gadamer, "Man and Language," 67. One important implication of Gadamer's view is that those with conflicting opinions on a topic are in fact expressing different answers to a common question--e.g., that pro-life and pro-choice advocates share a concern, and that by working our way back to that question we might arrive at a useful starting point for dialogue.

29. Rainer Maria Rilke, Letter 4, Letters to a Young Poet, trans. M. D. Herter (NY: Norton, 1934).

30. Martin Heidegger, What Is Called Thinking?, trans. by J. Glenn Gray (NY: Harper & Row, 1968), 76.

31. But the essential presupposition for such authentic inquiry is "the knowledge that one does not know." This is the paradox of authentic inquiry: one acknowledges and allows one's point of view, but suspends it. Authentic questioning demands authentic not-knowing, and this space is too often kept closed by our attachment to the rightness of our answers. The barrier to inquiry, says Gadamer, is "the power of opinion against which it is so hard to obtain an admission of ignorance. It is opinion that suppresses questions. . . .It would always like to be the general opinion" (Truth and Method, 329). But in authentic inquiry, one's answers are held out into the realm of the question.

32. See the discussion of Bohm's work in Peter M. Senge, The Fifth Discipline (NY: Doubleday, 1990), 238-249.

33. On a thinker's single thought, see Heidegger, What Is Called Thinking?, 50; and Nietzsche III, trans. Davis Farrell Krell (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1991), 4. On rubrics, see Nietzsche IV, 3-12.

34. Heidegger, Nietzsche IV, 9.

35. Martin Heidegger, "The Turning," in The Question Concerning Technology, trans. William Lovitt (NY: Harper & Row, 1977), 43. See also Dreyfus, Being-in-the-world, x, 321. Another of Heidegger's terms that suggests the "event" quality of

such insight is ereignis, which refers to the attainment of mutuality in the Being-being relationship. The word is widely translated as "the event of appropriation." See Heidegger, "Time and Being," in On Time and Being, trans. Joan Stambaugh (NY: Harper & Row, 1972), 19.

36. Heidegger, Nietzsche IV, 14.

37. Of his moment of insight which generated the idea of eternal return, Nietzsche said: "The thought came on me then" (Ecce homo; the Kaufmann translation [NY: Vintage, 1969, 295] has "idea" instead of "thought"). Heidegger observes that what Nietzsche here calls a "thought" is more accurately "a projection upon beings as a whole, with a view to how being is what it is. Such a projection opens up beings in a way that alters their countenance and importance" (Nietzsche II, 13). Thus thinking in the realm of distinction opens up an ontological space in which things can occur in a new way.

38. Our cultural tendency is to attack and resist an evil (e.g., wars against drugs, poverty, etc.), an approach which seems to have limited effectiveness. From the perspective of Landmark's work, resistance can be seen to reify the evil. A better focus for our energy might be the new possibility to be created: what we are for, rather than what we are against. This is not positive thinking, but the recognition of a dynamic of the ontological domain: resistance assures persistence.

39. Gadamer called play "the clue to ontological explanation." See Truth and Method, 91 ff.